



MUMBAI

American Center ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Bulletin

DECEMBER

2008

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY BY BETH BROWNSON

"And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

These famous words were spoken by President John F. Kennedy at his inaugural address to the United States in January 1961. He called upon Americans to rise and come to the aid of the poor in their neighborhood, across the nation, and around the world. President Kennedy recognized that government cannot solve the nation's problems, that it would take the collective will of all people working together to build a better world. With these words he launched the Peace Corps, one of the largest volunteer organizations helping overseas:

"In establishing our Peace Corps, we intend to make full use of the resources and talents of private institutions and groups. Universities, voluntary agencies, labor unions and industry will be asked to share in this effort – contributing diverse sources of energy and imagination – making it clear that the responsibility for peace is the responsibility of our entire society."

To this day, many Americans heed the call to serve their country by volunteering for the Peace Corps, and thousands of other organizations across the nation.

President Kennedy was not the first to call Americans to service. In 1939, Franklin Delano Roosevelt reminded the nation, "To us much is given; more is expected," calling upon the nation to help those in poverty, and ultimately calling upon Americans to make the greatest sacrifice, to serve in the armed forces to help nations the world over to defeat fascism. The call to volunteer and serve those in need is as strong today as ever. A report by the Corporation for National and Community Service indicates nearly 61 million people in America volunteered in 2007, giving 8.1 billion hours of service.

Volunteerism is inculcated in American children from an early age. Thousands of Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts take on community service projects every year, and they see their troop leaders' commitment to volunteerism every week. Children are invited to

volunteer to help others through school projects, such as Earth Day clean-ups, tutoring other students, or through their church, where they might help feed the poor in a soup kitchen or volunteer to care for younger children during church services. Many teenagers volunteer in hospitals to bring cheer to patients young and old, and are often called "candy strippers" because of the uniform they wore when the tradition started. In college, many students perform community service through fraternities or sororities that have monthly or annual service projects. Community service projects help team-building among the volunteers while increasing community pride.

From childhood, the spirit of volunteerism becomes part of the fabric of life for many Americans. Some become scout leaders or religious "Sunday School" teachers, but the list of volunteer opportunities seems endless. Most charities survive only thanks to the countless hours put in by volunteers. There are volunteer opportunities to match many different types of people. Introverts and extroverts each find the outlet that works for them. Whether putting stamps on envelopes, wielding a hammer to build a house for Habitat for Humanity, or overseeing a charity's multimillion-dollar budget, the breadth of opportunities is nearly endless.

There are people who work on committees to help raise funds for medical charities. The American Diabetes Association hosts an annual bicycle ride, the "Tour de Cure" bike ride, which takes place in towns and villages across America to increase awareness of the disease and its treatment, and to raise funds. A crew of volunteers in each location organizes bicycle rides for 5, 15, 40 and 100-mile routes. Thousands of bicycle riders raise donations from their friends and coworkers, asking them to sponsor the rider for ten cents, or even a dollar for each mile the cyclist rides. The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation was started in memory of a woman who died of breast cancer. Every year, this charity organizes thousands of men and women in communities around the country to walk or run in a race to raise funds for breast cancer research and awareness – the race is called "Race for the Cure." The American Heart Association sponsors an annual gala called the Heart Ball, usually on or around Valentine's Day, to raise money. The organizers of

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(Monday through Friday)

HOLIDAYS

December 25: Christmas Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Friends,

The year is in its final months and we're looking forward to a wonderful holiday season here. It is a really exciting time of the year with much anticipation for the New Year which also gives us time to reflect on the past year. In this month's bulletin, we are happy to feature "Volunteerism" as our topic of the month, with a focus on International Volunteer Day. Growing up, and through my student days, I was an active community volunteer with several organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, as well as an after-school tutor for underserved students. This is common for most American high school students and many high schools will give credit for such activities. It is a rewarding way to round out an academic day. Here in India, I've been fortunate to work on several Habitat for Humanity projects which have allowed me to visit small towns around Mumbai. We hope that this month's features are inspiring for all our readers and that in the New Year, you pledge to actively participate in community organizations as well.

From all of us at the American Center, we wish you warm holiday greetings for Id, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa, and all the best for 2009.

Sincerely,



Lynne Gadkowski
Deputy Director

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this event are all community volunteers. The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's volunteers sponsor a walkathon called "65 Roses," to raise funds for the foundation and its research. The American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association similarly host huge annual fund drives with the help of many volunteers. Every fall, church groups around the country gather volunteers to participate in the annual "Crop Walk" run by Catholic Relief Services, to raise funds to feed the poor in their communities and around the world. Like the Tour de Cure, each participant gets their friends, neighbors and coworkers to sponsor them on the walk. Rain or shine, thousands across the nation participate in this annual walk. Across America, there are volunteers who sit on the board of directors of every charity to ensure that the organization is run well and that the funds are safeguarded.

Public television and radio stations in the United States are required to raise a percentage of their annual operating revenues from donations from within the community the television station serves. Thousands of volunteers across the U.S. give their time to help support quality free public broadcasting. The stations host auctions at various times during the year. Volunteers solicit donations from individuals, and businesses throughout the community to auction off items such as free trips to tourist destinations, home decorations, wedding dresses, jewelry and art. Another set of volunteers then helps out on a live televised auction,

some showcase the items donated, some promote the items to the television viewers, many help by taking the calls that come in from bidders in the viewing area, and still more help by getting the items to the successful bidder.

Some volunteers donate their time to support the arts and culture in their community. Community organizers of art fairs and museum tour guides are often volunteers. The person at the zoo who gives a tour, or explains interesting facts about the animals is often a volunteer. The people at the symphony or in a playhouse who take the patrons' tickets and show them to their seats are usually volunteers who love the arts and want to help foster culture in their community.

There are many different causes that people volunteer for, not all human. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and other animal shelters each have a cadre of volunteers to help care for animals brought in to shelters. Some people who love hiking in the mountains volunteer several times a year to help conduct trail maintenance and clean up. Environmental and conservation clubs around the country help preserve our natural resources.

And there are those volunteers who take off the white gloves and work one-on-one with those less fortunate. Thousands serve their communities by being a Big Brother or Big Sister to a child missing one or both parents. Many volunteer in quiet ways, helping adults learn to read through Literacy Volunteers. There are those who volunteer to be on call anytime night or day to go to the hospital or police station to be with a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence or to talk to people in crisis on various hotlines set up to help prevent suicide or to help alcoholics fight their addiction, or to help runaway children who want to find their way back home or need a safe place to stay. There are volunteers who work at shelters for battered women and the homeless.

Some people heed the call of volunteerism especially during the December holiday season. There are people who stand out in the cold on street corners ringing a bell to call for donations to the Salvation Army to help shelters for homeless people. There are volunteers who organize gift drives so that poor children will receive Christmas gifts. There are people in work places and churches all over America that pick the name of a child from a list or off a "giving tree" and buy Christmas gifts for that child, someone they have never met. The U.S. Marines run the largest gift drive, called "Toys for Tots." There are families that make an entire Christmas dinner for a needy family.

Some volunteer out of patriotism, or for a political cause. In America, those who organize community events for political candidates, put together mailings, walk door-to-door and hand out literature on behalf of the candidates, and staff the phone banks calling voters, are all unpaid volunteers. It takes thousands of volunteers to make a successful national campaign, and every candidate in every small town, village and school board election needs volunteers to succeed.

There are volunteers across America who risk, and even sometimes lay down, their lives for others. Many towns and villages would have no firefighters or emergency medical services were it not for fellow citizens training and serving without pay, as firefighters or emergency ambulance crew.

To volunteer, many people just call the organization that they want to help and offer to volunteer, but many are more comfortable joining a club

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that participates in community service. Many of these, such as Rotary International, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, and Junior League, exist in many cities, even in other countries. Community service has become a mechanism for networking among professionals in cities and towns across America. At yet another level, there are professionals who donate their expertise to people in need: doctors who serve with Doctors Without Borders, traveling to the far corners of the world to provide medical care in unserved areas of the globe. Nurses often volunteer their time with the Red Cross, helping disaster victims or helping at blood banks to ensure a safe, reliable source of blood supply for surgery patients and disaster victims.

Even after a life of hard work, many in their retirement years still feel the need to give back to their communities and volunteer in whatever capacity they can. Many towns have even initiated a program called RSVP – Retired Senior Volunteer Program – to find the types of volunteer opportunities that seniors can readily fulfill. After ten years in existence, RSVP touts 1.25 million volunteers who have contributed 1.1 billion hours of volunteer service to their communities.

Some are called to volunteer based upon a lesson they learned as youngsters, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Others just volunteer because it feels good, it helps a person appreciate the blessings in their lives, and for many, just because it is fun. What can you do to help make your community a better place to be?

National Guard



CARE - Doctors Without Borders



Beth Brownson works at the American Consulate General, Mumbai

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

A Select Webliography on Volunteerism

<http://www.redcross.org/services/volunteer/>
American Red Cross – Volunteer Services

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>
AmeriCorps – A Program of the Corporation for National and Community Service

<https://medicalvolunteer.ca.gov/>
California Medical Volunteer

<http://www.californiavolunteers.org/>
California Volunteers

<http://www.hud.gov/volunteering/>
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Homes and Communities – Volunteering

<http://www.nps.gov/volunteer/>
U.S. Department of the Interior – National Park Service – Volunteer

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>
Peace Corps

<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/>
The President's Volunteer Service Award

<http://www.fws.gov/volunteers/>
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Volunteers

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/PublicService.shtml>
USA.gov – Public Service and Volunteerism

<http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov/>
USA Freedom Corps – The President's Call to Service

<http://www.usaid.gov/careers/studentprograms.html>
USAID Careers – Volunteer Student Interns

<http://www.volunteer.gov/gov/>
Volunteer.gov – Building America's Communities of Service

<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/>
Volunteering in America – Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://www.voa.org/>
Volunteers of America

<http://www.nature.org/volunteer/>
The Nature Conservancy – Volunteer

<http://www.volunteerinternational.org/>
International Volunteer Programs Association

Note: Internet sites included in this listing, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.

MUMBAI MONDAYS

A discussion on
Food in America and its Cultural Roots
led by Eric Jacobs

Monday, December 15
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Eric Jacobs joined the Department of State in March 2008 as a Management Officer and arrived in Mumbai in September 2008. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine. He worked primarily in economic development, focusing on project management, monitoring, and evaluation, and sustainable organizational development. Prior to joining the Peace Corps, Eric worked as a project manager for the Eckerd Corporation for nearly five years. He has a B.A. from the Florida State University and an M.B.A. from the University of South Florida in Tampa. He is passionate about the culinary arts.

American cuisine has been greatly shaped by centuries of immigration. Generations of ethnic groups from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas have each brought traditional foods and cooking methods from their homelands and shared them with their guests and new neighbors. Over time, many of these foods, recipes and techniques have blended together while retaining some of their unique native characteristics.

FILMS THIS MONTH

Friday, December 12

Dead Man Walking (1995, color, 122 mins)

Friday, December 19

Gorillas in the Mist (1988, color, 130 mins)

American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m.



Forceful, true-life drama starring Oscar-winner Susan Sarandon as Sister Helen Prejean, a progressive Louisiana nun who decides to serve as spiritual advisor to convicted racist murderer Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn) before he's executed by lethal injection. Robert Prosky, Raymond J. Barry also star.

Sigourney Weaver stars in this biography of Dian Fossey, the American naturalist who lived amongst the mountain gorillas of Central Africa, and whose unflagging crusade for their preservation may have cost her her life. Lush and lovingly rendered film costars Bryan Brown, Julie Harris; directed by Michael Apted.



Obama Elected 44th President of the U.S.

Barack Obama, unknown to most Americans just four years ago, will become the 44th President and the first African-American President of the United States. Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, and his running mate Senator Joseph Biden will take the oath of office on January 20, 2009.



Serving in the Senate since 2004, Obama introduced a bipartisan law allowing Americans to learn online how their tax dollars are spent. He also serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which helps oversee the care of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Previously, Obama worked as a community organizer in Chicago and as a civil rights attorney. He served for eight years in the Illinois State Senate.

Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Hawaii and has lived in many places, including Indonesia. His mother was from Kansas and his father from Kenya. Obama attended Columbia University in New York and earned a law degree at Harvard University, Massachusetts.

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Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.